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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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SUBJECT: Fortnightly Review May 22 - June 2, 1951

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Political

The two weeks under review have been a period of political activities in preparation for the elections under the new Nigerian Constitution which are expected to begin in July. The final constitution has not, however, yet been approved and promulgated. The active campaign of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons in the Western Provinces has been achieving considerable success and it is not certain that the Action Group will receive the support of majority of the electors in spite of its early promise. It appears that the Action Group does not possess the fire and political acumen of the NCNC which has a large number of the most experienced and effective politicians in the country. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that the NCNC may obtain a majority of the seats in the Western House of Assembly, although the situation is by no means clear. It is certain that in localities where native chiefs are strong and influential the trend will be against the NCNC.

The NCNC has also begun its campaign in the Eastern Provinces, although official informants are doubtful as to whether its position will be as strong in that region as in the Western Region. It appears that there will be many independent conservative candidates who wish to contest the election and will play important part in the campaign in the Eastern Provinces.

There will be no certainty as to what group will be of greatest importance even after the election of the primary electors and it is quite possible that there will be a continued campaign on the part of the NCNC to obtain the votes of the electors who were not pledged to them before the primary political elections. The final outcome will not be known before September or October.

The Nigerian People's Congress headed by Mr. H. O. Davies, which appears to be [illegible] oriented farthest to the left is showing some activity. The campaign speeches of Mr. Davies have contained many references to the progress and democracy of the Soviet Union. In addition there was frequent mention of the

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the plight of the Nigerian peasants. It remains to be seen, however, whether this rather small party will play any important part in the coming election campaign.

The so-called National Scholarship Board with Mr. Nduka Eze as Secretary has issued a release concerning its Nigerian students studying in Berlin under the auspices of the Eastern German Government. The release contained a letter recently received from one of the students stating that they had been provided with clothing, amusements and were studying economics at the moment. The members of the Scholarship Board are reported to be:

F. O. Coker, Chairman; M.A.O. Imoudu, V.C. Iketuonye;
S. G. Ikoku; E. Aghedo, Treasurer; S.M.U. Asemota;
Tony Enahoro; M.E. Kolagbodi and Nduka Eze, Secretary.

Since the release Mr. Ikoku has denied being a member.

Mr. A.E.T. Benson, new Chief Secretary of Nigeria is absent from Lagos at the moment on an extensive orientation tour of the Eastern and Northern Provinces.

The Nigerian Government has released a report on the improved finances and economic conditions in the British Cameroons.

The Colonial Secretary has announced the abolition of the West African Council which is to be replaced by an Inter-Territorial Council with heavy African representation.

Economic

The Assistant Public Relations Officer of the Nigerian Government for Marketing is publishing much material explaining the work of the various Marketing Boards. He has pointed out that the Boards will be spending nearly £10,000,000 on various development schemes. An attempt is being made to counter the continuance of the unpopularity marketing board system.

It has been announced that the new runway construction at the Kano airport at the cost of £100,000 will be completed by the summer of 1952. When completed the runway will be 8,610 feet long and 200 feet wide.

The Nigerian Government expects to be able to evacuate the complete peanut crop from Kano to the coast before the opening of the next season. This achievement is a course not so striking when one realizes that the last crop has been the smallest of the record

record of the last ten years. It remains to be seen whether the same record can be achieved for a normal crop year.

A large new building for the installation of an Auto-Telephone Exchange in Lagos is expected to be completed within two months, although the Telephone Exchange will probably not come into operation until some time in 1952.

A plan has been outlined for reorganization of the Nigerian Labor Congress. The proposed reorganization still contains a large number of pro-communist Labor leaders who are followers of Mr. Nduka Eze and at a recent meeting of Labor Union officials, a motion to the effect that Nigeria was not yet ready for central labor organization was adopted by a large majority. It was the general opinion that it would be better for each union to clean house before trying to establish anything more imposing.

Other

A commission of inquiry has been set up to investigate the tragic fire incident which took place in Kano several weeks ago.

Owing to the fact that this year will be the last one in which the Senior Cambridge Certificate Examination will be offered, new proposals have been made for qualifying tests for students preparing to take courses in higher education inside or outside Nigeria. The Gold Coast Government has arranged with Cambridge University for its students to take the Cambridge Overseas School Examination, and it has been recently announced that the Government of Nigeria has arranged with London University to have Nigerians qualified by taking the General Certificate of Education Examination of London University in 1952 and in subsequent years.

A. W. Childs
American Consul General